



Bulletproof Report Writing

COURSE OUTLINE

What to articulate, how to organize it, and why "because" wins cases

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Course Description

A police report is the first impression a prosecutor, a judge, a defense attorney, and eventually a jury will form of the officer who wrote it. A report that states conclusions without facts invites a suppression hearing. A report that documents every intrusion, explains every conclusion with the word “because,” and strives for at least five facts behind every search, seizure, and criminal element makes the defense think twice about filing the motion at all. Bulletproof Report Writing teaches the articulation skills officers need to write legally defensible reports: reports that let prosecutors convict the guilty and that protect the officer in court, in internal affairs, and in civil litigation.

Course title	Bulletproof Report Writing (BRW)
Length	8 hours (480 minutes, including a 60-minute lunch and two 10-minute breaks)
Learners	In-service training for certified law enforcement officers, including patrol, investigations, specialty units, corrections, supervisors, and administration; also appropriate for academy recruits and civilian report reviewers
Prerequisites	None
Methods	Lecture with slides, before-and-after report examples, five video articulation exercises with group debrief, Socratic discussion, case briefs, and a final articulation exam
Assessment	Five articulation exercises graded in class against the deck’s answer lists, ending with the Stolen Motorcycle Way final exam, plus instructor observation. Certificates issued through Blue to Gold University.
Instructor	Blue to Gold legal instructor. Course author: Anthony Bandiero, Esq., Attorney and President.
Materials	11-15-25 BRW Updated presentation (763 slides), BRW Instructor Manual (11-16-25), BRW Student Workbook
Contact	Blue to Gold, LLC, 174 E Neider Ave #212, Coeur d’Alene, ID 83815 888-579-7796 info@bluetogold.com www.bluetogold.com

Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, the student will be able to:

1. State the Three Golden Rules of report writing and apply them to a report excerpt.
2. Rewrite a conclusory sentence as a conclusion followed by “because” and the facts that support it.
3. Articulate at least five facts and circumstances supporting a search, seizure, or criminal element after watching a body camera video.

4. Distinguish a hunch, reasonable suspicion, probable cause, and proof beyond a reasonable doubt, and explain why a report must give particularized facts judged under the totality of the circumstances.
5. Identify the audiences for a police report and explain why the officer is the most important one.
6. Explain how inconsistency between a report and body camera footage destroys credibility, and how to document demeanor for the excited utterance rule.
7. Write in the first person and active voice, in paragraphs with topic headings, using roles rather than names, without all caps, and with quotes only when verbatim.
8. Organize a lengthy report with a synopsis, true chronology, a marked transition from traffic stop to criminal investigation, separate witness statements, bullet-point justifications, pictures, and a persuasive closing.
9. Locate the elements of an offense in the statute and jury instructions and write a closing that proves each one.

Schedule

Segment	Slides	Minutes
Part One: Opening and the Three Golden Rules	1 to 98	85
Break		10
Part Two: Preparation (First Impressions through Persuasive)	99 to 220	75
Part Two: Articulation (Burdens through Exercise 1)	221 to 375	70
Lunch		60
Part Three: Organization	376 to 524	60
Break		10
Part Four: Documentation	525 to 669	60
Part Five: Two Factors for Bulletproof Reports	670 to 736	35
Takeaways and Reserve Slides	737 to 763	15
Total		480

Part One: The Three Golden Rules

SLIDES 1 TO 98 | 85 MINUTES

Opening the Class (slides 1 to 14)

- ▶ Opener video, instructor introduction, course roadmap, and housekeeping (certificates, disclaimers, five exercises)
- ▶ Disclaimer: the reports shown in class are trimmed to teach one lesson and are not models of a full and complete report

Rule One: All legal conclusions must be supported by facts and evidence (slides 15 to 30)

- ▶ The standoff report a prosecutor would dismiss
- ▶ Documenting demeanor and timing for the excited utterance rule (NRS 51.095); *Valentin v. State*, 130 Nev. 1257 (2014)
- ▶ “Hysterical and distressed” before and after; law enforcement buzz words are conclusions

Rule Two: The most powerful word in a police report is “because” (slides 31 to 78)

- ▶ *Arizona v. Gant*, 556 U.S. 332 (2009): “Because the law says we can do it”
- ▶ Rewrite drill: non-compliant, high-crime area, hysterical, search for officer safety
- ▶ Strive for Five: at least five facts and circumstances for every search, seizure, or crime
- ▶ Consensual blood draw, patdown, and protective sweep: original, standard, and rewrite

Rule Three: Every intrusion on a person’s liberty or property must be documented (slides 79 to 98)

- ▶ Patdowns and detentions that find nothing still need a CAD note
- ▶ Armed robbery apartment call-out: the intrusion the report left out
- ▶ Custody versus detained: use the proper legal terms

Part Two: Report Preparation

SLIDES 99 TO 375 | 145 MINUTES

First Impressions (slides 99 to 109)

- ▶ A bad report affects credibility; the backfire effect
- ▶ Body camera does not replace the report: *United States v. Murray*, 548 F. Supp 3d 741 (2021)
- ▶ Report contradicted by body camera, gun suppressed: *United States v. Bradshaw*, 2025 WL 1445587 (E.D. Wis. 2025)

Audience (slides 110 to 126)

- ▶ You are the most important audience
- ▶ Write in plain language for readers who learned policing from television; no cop talk

Report Goals (slides 127 to 162)

- ▶ Discourage motions to suppress: *United States v. Foster*, 15 F.4th 874 (8th Cir. 2021); the defense gets its proof from your report
- ▶ Roadmap for the prosecutor: who did what (Dotty's and stolen Tahoe examples)
- ▶ Inaccurate information affects credibility

Truthful, Accurate, and Individual (slides 163 to 187)

- ▶ Individual reports, not cut-and-paste templates
- ▶ Duty not to embellish: *United States v. Hill*, 72 F. Supp. 3d 1111 (9th Cir. 2016)
- ▶ Report versus video (Times Square, surveillance) and omissions that look like lies

Professional and Complete (slides 188 to 210)

- ▶ Grammar, spelling, and proofreading
- ▶ Complete means everything material to guilt or innocence, including the witness you doubt

Persuasive (slides 211 to 220)

- ▶ Persuade means convince, not sell; the lewdness report before and after

Burdens of Proof: Hunches (slides 221 to 243)

- ▶ *Terry v. Ohio*, 392 U.S. 1 (1968); *Safford Unified School District v. Redding*, 557 U.S. 364 (2009): a hunch is a "slight possibility"
- ▶ *Brown v. Texas*, 443 U.S. 47 (1979); *Florida v. J.L.*, 529 U.S. 266 (2000); *United States v. Jones*, 606 F.3d 964 (8th Cir. 2010)

Reasonable Suspicion (slides 244 to 271)

- ▶ A "moderate chance" of illegal activity; *Terry* case study
- ▶ Here-and-now factors, not generalizations: *United States v. Manrique-Frias*, 692 F. Supp. 3d 1036 (D. Mont. 2023)

- ▶ Seeing dead people: write so the reader sees what you saw

Probable Cause and Beyond a Reasonable Doubt (slides 272 to 295)

- ▶ Illinois v. Gates, 462 U.S. 213 (1983): a “fair probability”
- ▶ You gather the beyond-a-reasonable-doubt case; the prosecutor delivers it

Awareness and N.E.R.D.S. (slides 296 to 352)

- ▶ Situational awareness; factors worth articulating: nervousness, evasive movement, concealment, deception, description, records, location
- ▶ “Nervous” is meaningless without the facts (the Hunt hearing)
- ▶ Totality of the circumstances: United States v. Sokolow, 490 U.S. 1 (1989); United States v. Arvizu, 534 U.S. 266 (2002)

Articulation Exercise 1: Patdown Ave (slides 353 to 375)

- ▶ Video exercise: at least five factors justifying a patdown; debrief against the deck’s fifteen

Part Three: Report Organization

SLIDES 376 TO 524 | 60 MINUTES

First Person (slides 376 to 389)

- ▶ Write “I saw,” not “Your Affiant” or “Deputy Smith observed,” even in warrants

Direct and Active Voice (slides 390 to 405)

- ▶ Active voice defined; Yoda rewrites; “The car was searched and a Glock was found” before and after

Give Them a Break (slides 406 to 413)

- ▶ Paragraphs organize the report and give the reader a micro-break

Articulation Exercise 2: Trafficking Blvd (slides 414 to 434)

- ▶ Video exercise: at least five factors the driver knew marijuana was in the truck bed; willful blindness

No All Caps (slides 435 to 456)

- ▶ All caps is hard to read and hides proper nouns (Clear vodka, The Riverbank); fine for inventories and CAD notes

Use Roles (slides 457 to 475)

- ▶ Roles are legally significant, last names are not; role plus name when roles repeat

Articulation Exercise 4: Personal Use Rd (slides 476 to 494)

- ▶ Video exercise: at least five factors both occupants knew meth was in the car

Quotes and Topic Headings (slides 495 to 524)

- ▶ Quote when the prosecutor needs the exact words and you are certain; otherwise “words to the effect of”
- ▶ A true pro uses topic headings

Part Four: Report Documentation

SLIDES 525 TO 669 | 60 MINUTES

Synopsis (slides 525 to 530)

- ▶ Seven items in the first paragraph of a lengthy report

Articulation Exercise 3: Abandonment Dr (slides 531 to 548)

- ▶ Video exercise: at least three factors the suspect abandoned the backpack

Chronology and RS Transitions (slides 549 to 568)

- ▶ Justification before intrusion: exigency, armed and dangerous, probable cause
- ▶ Mark the moment a traffic stop became a criminal investigation

Details Matter (slides 569 to 593)

- ▶ “Write for prosecution, not probable cause”; what the prosecutor will want to know
- ▶ Cross-examination on what you did not do; Commonwealth v. Karen Read

Witnesses (slides 594 to 599)

- ▶ Interview separately and say so; document each statement rather than “corroborated”

Bullet Points and Brainstorming (slides 600 to 622)

- ▶ “I frisked the suspect because:” lists; DUI driving and impairment; brainstorming before complex reports

Pictures (slides 623 to 663)

- ▶ Medical, injuries, crime scene, drugs, weapons, lineups, surveillance

Closing the Report (slides 664 to 669)

- ▶ Put the facts into the elements; do not just recite the statute

Part Five: Two Factors for Bulletproof Reports

SLIDES 670 TO 736 | 35 MINUTES

Elements (slides 670 to 711)

- ▶ Prove the elements and articulate how you lawfully got the evidence
- ▶ Statutes can be missing an element: NRS 205.220 and Harvey v. State, 78 Nev. 417 (1962)
- ▶ Jury instructions are the best source; Alaska theft example (Alaska Stat. Ann. §§ 11.46.120, 11.46.100, 11.46.990)

Final Exam: Stolen Motorcycle Way (slides 712 to 736)

- ▶ Video exam: at least seven factors the boyfriend knew the motorcycle was stolen

Takeaways

SLIDES 737 TO 763 | 15 MINUTES

- ▶ Write in the first person; write chronologically; use topic headings; think N.E.R.D.S.
- ▶ No all caps; use paragraph breaks; direct and active voice; roles, not names
- ▶ Articulate conclusions with “because” and strive for five; bullet points are a mic drop
- ▶ Reserve slides (751 to 763): DUI transition sequence, *State v. Ferreira*, 988 P.2d 700 (1999)